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Governor



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Governor Baker Elevates State's Response to Widespread Drought

Officials Outline State Response, Encourage Public Water Conservation

NORTH ANDOVER – Today, in response to the fifth consecutive month of abnormally dry conditions across the Commonwealth, Governor Charlie Baker outlined continued actions to be taken by state agencies to assist Massachusetts' residents, farmers, and municipalities as the region continues to face the effects associated with prolonged drought conditions. Joined by state and federal officials at Smolak Farms in North Andover, Governor Baker's announcement follows the recent [declaration](#) of a Drought Warning for Central and Northeast Massachusetts, a Drought Watch for Southeast Massachusetts and the Connecticut River Valley, and a Drought Advisory for Western Massachusetts and the Cape and Islands.

"With much of Massachusetts continuing to experience extremely dry conditions, I am asking the public to administer best water conservation practices for the foreseeable future," **said Governor Charlie Baker.** "By minimizing water use, especially while outside, we will collectively take crucial steps necessary to enable ground water and reservoirs to rebound quicker as we work together to manage and reduce the effects of a statewide drought. Individuals should also check with their city or town officials to find out what local restrictions are in place as they vary from community to community."

“Our Administration continues to support communities across the Commonwealth to work in unison as we prepare for the very serious ramifications that a prolonged drought can have on our economy and public safety,” **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito.** “From farming operations to wild fires, droughts can have lasting effects, and it is incredibly important we all work together to conserve water while these dry conditions persist.”

To promote public water conservation, the administration is encouraging the public to adopt water saving techniques into their daily routine to assist with extremely low groundwater and streamflow levels around Massachusetts. Outdoor techniques include limiting outdoor water use, covering swimming pools when not in use to prevent evaporative loss, sweeping driveways, walks, patios, and other outdoor areas with a broom rather than hosing them off. Indoor water conservation techniques include reducing shower times to five minutes or less, washing only full loads of laundry and dishes, turning off the tap when brushing teeth or shaving, and fixing water leaks in household items. Additionally, the Baker-Polito Administration has instructed all state-run and state-owned facilities to take appropriate measures to conserve water.

“Extended drought conditions can have far reaching, long term environmental impacts that affect us all, making it increasingly important that we work collaboratively and incorporate water conservation practices into our daily routines,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton.** “The Baker-Polito Administration will continue to work with residents and stakeholders around the Commonwealth to support and protect our ecological, agricultural and recreational resources during this prolonged period of dry weather.”

The Baker-Polito Administration is also reminding residents throughout Massachusetts to be cognizant of the extremely dry conditions and be extra careful when using grills, matches, candles or open flames outdoors, and to be especially mindful about disposing of smoking materials in proper containers. State fire officials remain engaged with fire departments and municipal water suppliers to ensure there is a heightened preparedness in case of a major fire, and have mutual aid plans in place to provide response for situations where water supply issues arise. Individuals are also encouraged to heed local orders and restrictions and take all necessary precautions to prevent fires that may spread quickly. Furthermore, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), together with other state agencies, is working to ensure that cities and towns have the necessary information and support so they can implement appropriate measures to conserve water and ensure the water needs of the community are met.

“The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency is coordinating with state

agencies and with cities and towns to ensure Massachusetts will be able to support local needs in the event drought conditions worsen,” **said Public Safety Secretary Dan Bennett.** “We have not reached the point where demand for water exceeds supply, but we are planning and developing the capacity to provide large volumes of bottled water to multiple communities and to provide tankers of potable water to replenish municipal tanks. We are also working with local fire chiefs to ensure mutual aid agreements and plans are in place so adequate supplies of water are available to support firefighting needs.”

Recognizing the adverse effect drought conditions have on the Commonwealth’s agricultural industry and other crucial economic sectors, the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development is refocusing a larger percentage of state small business technical assistance grants to Community Development Corporations in effected counties, and working with state and industry officials to develop a Massachusetts Drought Emergency Loan Fund that will provide working capital to family farms and small businesses affected by the drought, and bridge the gap to federal assistance for impacted agricultural businesses. Additionally, the Baker-Polito Administration continues to consult with the United States Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency to determine the full scope of the drought’s impacts on the Commonwealth’s agricultural industry. Other measures currently underway include continued assessment of crop damage statewide, and developing a complete list of state and federal resources available for farmers with economic hardships as a result of the drought.

“Our new Massachusetts Drought Emergency Loan Fund will provide affordable working capital loans to small businesses, including family farms, grappling with a downturn in business caused by this prolonged drought,” **said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Jay Ash.** “Additionally, we are activating all of our business development channels, to remind consumers that Massachusetts farmers markets and farm stands still have top-quality produce for sale, and they have our full support.”

The declaration of a Drought Warning, Drought Watch, and Drought Advisory requires the Massachusetts Drought Management Task Force to meet on a regular basis to more closely assess conditions across the state, coordinate dissemination of information to the public, and help state, federal and local agencies prepare any responses that may be needed in the future. The Task Force will next meet in September. For further information on water conservation and what you can do, visit the Department of Conservation and Recreation’s drought management [page](#) and the MassDEP Water Conservation [page](#).

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